

STRANGERS & PILGRIMS

1 Peter 2:11, 12

Introduction

Peter addresses believers and communicates to them the glad tidings that they are God's people who possess tremendous privileges.

God's people are his own possession. In turn, we always should be mindful of our status, for Peter pictures us as chosen by God, royal, and holy.

Peter has shown how his readers are God's people, loved by him and called to holiness. They are different from other people in the world, and the rest of Peter's letter will explore the practical consequences of this, especially as the Turkish Christians face hostility and some outright persecution.

Term of Endearment

Dearly beloved... Some are not certain that Peter actually visited this area of Asia Minor, but he loves them whether they've met or not. We are more effective in helping other believers if they know we truly love them.

People don't care how much we know until they know how much we care.

Peter Does Not Command

beseech = To entreat; to supplicate; to implore; to ask or pray with urgency

Being an Apostle, Peter might have demanded obedience in the name of the Lord, but he does not.

“As strangers and pilgrims”

Barnes: A stranger is one without the rights of citizenship, as distinguished from a citizen; and it means here that Christians are not properly citizens of this world, but that their citizenship is in heaven, and that they are here mere sojourners. A pilgrim, properly, is one who travels to a distance from his own country to visit a holy place, or to pay his devotion to some holy object; then a traveler, a wanderer.

Foreigners Are Not Always Accepted

As foreigners ourselves, we should enjoy different things, heavenly things. Foreigners have pleasures others do not understand.

“Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”

Abstain— Strong's: to hold oneself off, that is, refrain: - abstain.

*Mac: The command to **abstain** signifies that saints have the ability by the new life and the indwelling Spirit to restrain the lustful flesh, even in a postmodern culture dominated by sensuality, immorality, and moral relativism.*

Fleshly lusts-- JFB: Not only the gross appetites which we have in common with the brutes, but all the thoughts of the unrenewed mind.

Spurgeon: Those *fleshly lusts* belong to this present evil world, but you do not belong to it; you are “strangers and pilgrims” here, therefore feel an absolute alienation towards such things, an utter abhorrence of them. Do not even think of them, much less practice them. “Abstain from fleshly lusts;” for, while they injure the body, that is not the worst thing that they do, for they “war against the soul.” Fleshly lusts always hurt the soul. They do serious injury to the body, for they are contrary to the laws of health; but the main point for you to consider is that they “war against the soul.” No men or women can ever commit an act of uncleanness of the body without grievously injuring the soul. It leaves a weakness, a defilement, a wound, a scar upon the soul; so may God graciously keep us from it altogether!

This Means ‘WAR’!

Mac: **which** indicates that it is the character of such lusts and cravings to **war** against the new heart God has created within the **soul** of every believer. **War** is a strong term that generally means to carry out a long-term military campaign. It implies not just antagonism but a relentless, malicious aggression. Since it takes place in **the soul**, it is a kind of civil war. With the concept of **fleshly lusts**, the image is of an army of lustful terrorists waging an internal search-and-destroy mission to conquer the soul of the believer.

Even Paul found himself in the midst of intense struggle that every Christian experiences: Romans 7:14-23; Galatians 5:17-18

“Having your conversation honest”

In order to effectively evangelize, Christians’ transformed inner lives must be visible to the outside world. Peter thus commanded his readers to **keep** their conversation/**behavior** (daily conduct) honest.

Conversation—Strong’s: behavior

Barnes’: Your conduct. That is, lead upright and consistent lives.

Philippians 1:27 Only let your **conversation** be as it becometh the gospel of Christ:

Honest—Strong’s: beautiful, good, valuable or virtuous, honest, worthy. Philippians 4:8

“Among the Gentiles”

Gentiles (*ethnos*) refers to “nations,” or the unsaved world

“That, whereas they speak against you as evildoers”

Evildoers—JFB: Because as Christians they could not conform to heathenish customs, they were accused of disobedience to all legal authority

Kistemaker: In the middle of the first century, Christians were a distinct minority and often were the object of slander and subsequent persecution. For example, because of their refusal to participate in emperor worship, they faced false accusations that often resulted in suffering and death. To suppress the rumor that he himself had put the city to the torch, Nero blamed the Christians for the burning of Rome. He made Christians scapegoats by slandering and persecuting them.

Nieboer: when the Christian is popular with the world, it is sure evidence that he is not living as Christ-like a life as he should. Even carnal Christians will speak ill of you, if your life is what it should be.

“They may by your good works, which they shall see”

Good works are things that cannot help but be observed, and whose motive cannot be questioned.

Early Christians Good Works

Tertullian contrasts the early Christians and the heathen: *Slavery silently and gradually disappeared by the power of the Christian law of love, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”* ***When the pagans deserted their nearest relatives in a plague, Christians ministered to the sick and dying. When the Gentiles left their dead unburied after a battle and cast their wounded into the streets, the disciples hastened to relieve the suffering.***

“Glorify God in the day of visitation”

Glorify God... a ‘good advertisement of the virtues of God’

JP: So they see a certain way of acting -- some humble act of love (Gal. 5:6) or some righteous act courage (Heb. 10:34) or some self-denying act of generosity (2 Cor. 8:1-2) -- and they notice that you must not be hoping in what people usually hope in -- self-exaltation, safety, money -- and they are puzzled as to where your hope is. So they ask about your hope: where do you get your confidence, your contentment, your satisfaction when you act that way?

Day of visitation-- The "day of visitation" here could be the day of Christ's coming or it could be the day of their conversion when they are visited with the converting power of the Spirit. In either case, the overarching point is that God gets glory when his people persevere in good deeds.

So what...?

Are you making intentional choices against the lusts, the desires of the flesh?

Are you engaged in war or surrender?

How's your testimony among the Gentiles?

Do you have a reputation of honest, ethical conduct with the unsaved at work, your unsaved neighbors, and your unsaved family members?

Is your life a good commercial for Jesus Christ?